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ABSTRACT

The author sketches some of the characteristics and trends in programs for the preparation and continuing education of educational administrators. He claims that one of the most pervasive changes in the last decade or two has been toward theory-based content drawn from the social and behavioral sciences. The author sees three paradoxes in current programs. The first paradox centers on the anomaly of progress without gain, or the possession of more knowledge without having reduced the level of ignorance. The second paradox concerns the need to reconcile the new technology of management systems with the call for more humanistic education. The third paradox reflects the confidence crisis in leadership centering around the growing numbers of administrators who lack the confidence to lead. (Author/WM)

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TOPIC: PREPARATION PROGRAMS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS--AASA COMMITTEE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

PLACE: Room 321-3-5, Civic Auditorium

TIME: Sunday, March 18, 2:30 p.m.

PROGRAM: Page 31

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My assignment is twofold: first, to sketch a few of the major characteristics and trends of contemporary preparation programs and professional development for school administrators and, second, to share with you some of the dilemmas which the AASA Committee for the Advancement of School Administration faces as it attempts to advance school administration through its interests in better preparation and professional development programs. Since we want to assure sufficient time for your discussion of these matters, my statement will necessarily be rather brief and simplistic. For those of you who yearn for a more penetrating understanding of preparation programs in school administration, I recommend your study of a series of eight monographs on administrator preparation published by the University Council for Educational Administration and ERIC. Much of my statement which follows is drawn from three of those monographs: Preparing Educational Leaders: A Review of Recent Literature by Farquhar and Piele, Emerging Practices in the Continuing Education of School Administrators by Lutz and Ferrante, and Unconventional Methods and Materials for Preparing Educational Administrators by Wynn.

Preparation programs in educational administration have undergone considerable change, particularly during the past decade and a half. However, there is still great diversity among these programs, both in content and format, which indicates that there is little general agreement regarding the nature of an ideal program. Nevertheless it is possible to note several generalizations.

One of the most pervasive changes has been toward theory-based content drawn from the social and behavioral sciences. Courses or units of study on themes such as administrative response to conflict, the management of change, organizational behavior and climate, the application of general system theory to school administration, and the politics of education are common.

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These themes illustrate movement toward the concept that the school administrator is essentially an applied social scientist who must be able to apply concepts drawn from sociology, political science, social psychology, economics, anthropology, and public administration to the great social, political, and economic problems that pervade modern school administration. Although many institutions still retain the old familiar

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course titles based upon traditional administrative functions, such as school finance, personnel administration, school community relations, and school plant planning, and although student administrators still rank these courses high in importance, on many campuses even these courses are moving from orientation toward techniques to orientation toward social science based concepts.

Many institutions require 12 to 15 credits of work by student administrators in the social and behavioral sciences. This growing recognition of the importance of social and behavioral science is derived from several assumptions: first, that the social sciences provide a better way of gathering data; second, they help the administrator view reality more effectively and in broader context; and, third, they improve the rationale for predicting the consequences of decisions and actions. However, there is still very little agreement on what social science content is most relevant to school administration. There is also a scarcity of well-developed rationales for the use of social and behavioral sciences in administrator preparation programs; and there are real difficulties in the delivery systems of social and behavioral science substances to programs in educational administration.

So far, only a few institutions have made any concerted effort to bring the humanities to bear upon the preparation of school administrators, although a few institutions are doing some very interesting experimental work in this effort.

One should not assume that this new emphasis upon social and behavioral science theory has made the study of educational administration more ivory tower bound because a second pervasive trend has been toward more reality-oriented instruction in preparation programs. The very rapid development within the last decade of laboratory training, case studies, multimedia simulation of school districts and administrative tasks, management games, and self-instructional materials are all illustrative of the trend toward bringing reality into the classroom. The reciprocal trend of bringing the classroom into reality through internships and other types of guided field experiences is also very evident. These two trends of greater use of reality-oriented instruction and of social and behavioral science based content are commonly joined through the application of social science theory to the very practical problems generated by simulations, games, case studies, and internships through the laboratory mode of instruction. Student feedback from these experiences is consistently positive and reinforces the belief that reality-oriented instruction is highly motivating, that it provides opportunity for practical skill development, permits clinical evaluation of administrative behavior in a low-risk climate, generates affective development as well as cognitive development, encourages introspection, and forces the student to accept responsibility for the consequences of his behavior in a manner that is impossible in more conventional instructional modes.

One of the major weaknesses of program development in educational administration is the paucity of rigorous attempts to evaluate various types of program content and organization. Meanwhile the controversy over their effectiveness continues to rage with some critics persuaded that administrator preparation programs are generally ineffective, while others hold contrary views. Evaluative data are so scattered and fragmented that conclusive evidence is elusive.

Closely related to the evaluation problem is the design problem. Curriculum development in school administration is largely fragmented and noncumulative, suggest-

ing the absence of comprehensive conceptualization of the total program. Much of this difficulty can be attributed to our failure so far to reach any comprehensive conceptualization of the administrative function itself, particularly in behavioral terms against which program designs can be developed and evaluated. However, a few universities are doing some creative work in designing programs based upon the development of essential administrative competencies.

Let me mention very briefly several other trends and problems in preparation programs beyond those of curriculum. Long familiar problems of student recruitment still remain. There is very little evidence of systematic recuitment of students on most campuses. Student administrators are almost entirely self-recruited, an arrangement which has generated many able student administrators but certainly fails to attract many others. The problems of recruiting more minority group and female administrator candidates remains critical on most campuses. The old controversy of whether administrator recruits should come exclusively from the teaching ranks or whether the recruitment base should be broadened to attract persons from outside the teaching profession will fill almost any faculty meeting with wild debate.

The selection problem also remains unsolved, judging from the great variation in selection practices and the expressed dissatisfaction with the validity and utility of admissions procedures and standards currently in use. Further research is badly needed to devise screening mechanisms that have some validity in predicting administrative performance.

Several studies have concluded that there are too many colleges and universities engaged in the preparation of administrators. The ambitions of many of these institutions outrun their resources and their commitment, resulting in many programs that are too small, too poorly staffed to be accredited to sustain the quality of graduates and the efficient use of limited resources. This circumstance raises familiar problems of accreditation and certification of administrators. Only 118 of the 362 institutions--less than a third--offering programs in educational administration are NCATE accredited for the preparation of school superintendents. The movement of a few states away from certification requirements for school administrators and the absence of hard evidence demonstrating any relationship between administrative preparation and administrative performance pose real problems for those who seek to defend present practices and standards in preparation programs. Recent court decisions concerned with equal employment opportunity pose the possibility that the legality of certification procedures may be challenged.

The supply and demand problem also impinges upon considerations of the number of preparation programs needed and the level of admission and graduation requirements. For a long time we lacked adequate data on the supply and demand problem, but recent studies show fairly conclusively that the supply of administrators, at least at the minimum credentialling level, far outruns the demand.

Many authorities who have studied administrator preparation programs criticize the lack of meaningful interaction between professors and practitioners in the field in the recruitment and selection of students, as well as in program design and evaluation. Many practitioners claim, perhaps with justification in many instances, that professors of administration are out of touch with the reality of administrative practice. Several observers have suggested the need for exchange programs to bring practitioners onto college faculties in exchange for professors reentering service in the field.

Let me turn briefly to the matter of continuing education for the school administrator. The line between pre-service preparation and continuing education is hard to draw. Lutz and Ferrante believe that pre-service education should "stress the development of behavior that will permit and facilitate long-range and flexible administrative practice [while] continuing education should stress behavior in specific situations limited by time and space, based on the general skills learned during pre-service education."

Lutz and Ferrante identify a number of old problems which handicap our realization of viable continuing education programs. Many school districts are notoriously stingy in allocating funds for personnel development through continuing education, notwithstanding the fact that investment in leadership development is probably a high-yield, low-cost expenditure. Many school districts are so understaffed administratively that time for continuing education would be constraining anyway. Thus school administrators, unlike military officers and corporation executives, are often dependent largely upon their own resources of time and money to sustain their own professional development. Many university-based continuing education programs for administrators are random and quixotic outgrowths of professors' interests or so generalized in nature that they are not very congruent with the needs of administrators as they see them in the hard realities of their jobs. For example, Hoffman identified these five needs in highest priority in the minds of practicing school administrators: long-range planning, educational finance, curriculum, negotiations, and staffing, while only one of these ranked among the highest five in frequency of offerings by UCEA institutions. This ambivalence could be reduced through greater use of outstanding superintendents working more closely with university personnel in planning continuing education programs.

The following list of reforms in university-sponsored continuing education programs is drawn from the works of several authorities who have studied this problem.

1. More continuing education for superintendents by universities.

2. More relevant and less time-bound continuing education content.

3. Cooperation between universities and other agencies providing continuing education programs.

4. Longer term continuing education programs.

5. Off-campus, university-sponsored, residential continuing education programs.

6. Better systematized, integrated, and cohesive continuing education programs.

7. The meeting of administrator continuing education needs by other organizations external to the university.

8. Development of continuing education programs to meet specific needs of specific administrators with methods suited to a clientele of busy, intelligent, and highly educated professionals.

9. Integration of pre-service and continuing education programs to provide a single educational program that will develop the best possible corps of professionals for administrative positions.

10. Far better research on the continuing education needs of administrators and better evaluation of programs.

Obviously a great many programs of continuing education for school administrators are outside the universities. These include the AASA national conventions; the hundreds of conferences and workshops conducted by professional associations, individual school districts, and other educational agencies; the studies and other activities of school study councils; professional publications, cassettes, and other self-study materials; and of course the enterprises of the National Academy for School Executives. Lutz and Ferrante describe some creative continuing education programs that exist across the country but nevertheless conclude that their attempt to identify a large number of innovative continuing education practices in operation has, in their view, failed. They conclude that if one is looking for a single program to serve as a model for the creation of innovative programs for continuing education of school administrators, little of value can be learned by reviewing present practices.

Their study reveals most continuing education programs to be spasmodic rather than programmatic, unrelated to the assessed needs of practicing administrators, focused too narrowly on the technical and tactical aspects of the job, inadequately financed, undertaken without the planning, implementation, and evaluation that is essential to high yield, packaged into inconvenient delivery systems, and usually not patronized by a significant percentage of administrators. This is indeed an unlovely picture of one of our most imperative needs, the viable delivery of continued professional development without which any administrator is likely to become not only obsolete but increasingly dangerous to society.

Let me editorialize a bit on what I've had to say so far. It seems to me that we face a number of difficult paradoxes in the preparation and continuing education of administrators. First, we have the anomaly of progress without gain. The body of professional literature, the content of preparation programs, and the level of practicing superintendents' preparation have all been raised very substantially over the past two decades, while at the same time the area of the unknown in school administration is presently as great as ever. This circumstance is roughly analogous to the great expansion of educational opportunity around the world while the rate of illiteracy still grows. School finance is an interesting case in point. Although few educational problems have been attacked as vigorously and as persistently through research, ever since the days of Cubberley and through two very ambitious recent national studies, nevertheless the field of school finance is today perhaps in greater disarray than at any time in our educational history. After decades of research on the evaluation of instruction and learning, accountability systems still flounder because the evaluation technology is not yet well developed. Although the larger society has had half a century of experience with collective bargaining, most schools are still operating at a very primitive level of sophistication in bargaining. After decades of research and instruction in staff personnel administration, the morale and the organizational climate is probably worse in many schools than it ever was.

Second, at the same moment that we are on the verge of a breakthrough in the technology of management systems, we are simultaneously trying to respond to the call for more humanistic education. We are witnessing in our society a clear call for open

education, which is an anathema to accountability systems. Open education is rather free from predetermined goals set uniformly for every student, free from performance standards for both students and teachers, free from close monitoring and quality control and other circumstances which are essential to accountability systems. Evaluation, accountability, and management systems are largely incompatible with the existentialism which is the guiding philosophy of open and humane education. Open education and management technology may not be inherently incompatible, but the application of accountability and management systems to open schools is an infinitely more difficult task than its application to conventional schools. Somewhere here is a sharp value conflict between the art and science of school administration which all our learning has so far failed to resolve.

Finally, our preparation of school administrators is beleaguered by a confidence crisis in leadership. This is a microcosm of the larger society's growing mistrust of executives and the public's insistence upon greater accountability by executives at the same time that their authority is increasingly circumscribed. John Gardner speaks of this as the "anti-leadership vaccine." He warns that "we are in danger of falling under the leadership of men who lack the confidence to lead. And we are in danger of destroying the effectiveness of those who have a natural gift for leadership. . . We are immunizing a high proportion of our most gifted young people against tendencies to leadership." I often marvel at the quality of self-recruited students who enter preparation programs and later assume leadership responsibilities in schools, notwithstanding this anti-leadership vaccine. I wish that I could be of more help to them in facing this awesome dilemma.

Let me close with some questions relative to all of this which are now before the AASA Committee for the Advancement of School administration. I pose them as questions because CASA has not reached any consensus on most of them and because we who serve on CASA welcome all the counsel we can get with respect to them. AASA's influence upon the preparation of school administrators has been sharply altered as a result of the recent change in active membership requirements for AASA, which no longer requires that active members must have completed two years of graduate study in school administration programs in NCATE approved institutions. On the ballot for the amendment to membership requirements appeared the following statement:

> The Executive Committee recognizes the importance for AASA to continue to maintain a strong position supporting proper preparation and professional development for its members...The Executive Committee has charged the Committee for the Advancement of School Administration with the responsibility for recommending the most desirable standards of professional preparation and growth and with establishing programs of public recognition for those members meeting these standards.

The Committee for the Advancement of School Administration is now wrestling with this assignment. We are inclined to think that the desired minimum level of preparation should be two years of graduate level preparation in school administration at an NCATE approved college or university. However, this raises several important considerations. Should any recognition be available to those school administrators who are established in their positions but who have already completed their graduate study at one of the programs that is not NCATE approved? If so, should this recognition include only those who are presently superintendents, or should it include any AASA member in any administrative positions? Should the

recognition be cut off at some point in time? How about those members who are within three credits, or ten credits, or 25 credits of completing two-year programs, or even doctorates, at non-NCATE approved institutions? How should we deal with members who have half their work at an NCATE approved institution and half at one that is not accredited? How satisfied are we as a professional organization with NCATE criteria and standards of accreditation? Are those criteria and standards really relevant to the demonstration of competency in administrative practice or are they related to artifacts of the colleges and universities? How capable is AASA and how receptive is NCATE to the modification of these accreditation standards and criteria to make them more relevant to competency in professional practice? How willing are AASA members to serve on NCATE visiting teams?

We come now to an even more difficult set of problems related to the identification of standards of continuing professional development of administrators and the public recognition of those who attain those standards. What should constitute units of continuing professional development for recognition purposes? attendance at NASE seminars? attendance at AASA conventions? Even if the member spends his time there in cocktail parties rather than at discussion groups and general sessions? How about attendance at other workshops including those sponsored by local districts? Would a two-day workshop carry twice as much credit as a one-day workshop? How about professional reading or other types of independent study? How much credit, if any, should one get for visiting other schools? for travel in other countries? Determining equivalencies among these various options is obviously a real Pandora's box that no one yearns to get into. The feasibility of administering this sort of thing is mind-boggling.

Should AASA then attempt to recognize pre-service preparation only? Should continuing education recognition be restricted to attendance at NASE programs exclusively? Is it possible to equate inservice development activities with deficiencies in the original preparation program or with improved performance on the job? Should AASA confine itself to designation and recognition of members whose professional preparation is adequate? If recognition should be extended beyond that, should it be confined to members who demonstrate outstanding performance on the job regardless of any specific continuing education activities? But this is like rushing to the aid of someone being mugged--everybody agrees that it is a good idea but nobody wants to do it.

Let me state then the general problem on which we welcome your counsel: How can AASA exercise strong support of proper preparation and professional development of school administrators now that AASA membership requirements are completely unrelated to the member's preparation and professional development?

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